54.7.66.12

AN Expostulation WITH THE BISHOPS, so called, in ENGLAND,

Concerning their Jurisdiction over the People of God, called QUAKERS; with a few wholesom Words of Exhortation and Advice, tending to unite *Them* with *Us* in one true Spiritual Worship.

BIBL. CANT. ACAD. 90.9

FRiends, Consider that many Years are passed, wherein God's Hand hath eminently appeared in divers Overturns, since the former Bishops were taken away, or did cease to exercise that Office in their respective Dioceses; whether because they were discountenanced by Authority, or for want of their Revenues, or for want of Love & Faith in Christ (whom they said, call'd them to watch over, and feed his Lambs) we shall not now determine; though we are perswaded that the Office of a Bishop or Over-seer (that is made so by the Holy Ghost) is, to watch over the Flock of Christ & feed them, as well (if not more chiefly) in the most perilous times of Persecution, as in the times of greatest Prosperity * For the Overseers that were ordained by the Holy Ghost in the Primitive times, did watch over their Flocks, when they had neither large Revenues, nor temporal Princes to uphold them, but were under most grievous Persecutions: But when men in Authority began to dislike your

* *Act.* 20. 28. Witness also the Ecclesiastical *History* of the *Church* for the first 300. Years.

Way, and the temporal Power and large Revenues which were annexed to your Offices, were taken away, we know not one of the Bishops that did stand in the Power of God, willingly and of a ready Mind, to watch over his See; but We the poor Flock, were left to wander, or become a Prey to such as God did never send, or ordain to be his Ministers; who whilst they were countenanced by Authority, endeavoured with Force and Cruelty to rule over us, and did feed themselves with the Fat, and cloath themselves with the Fleece, but did not feed us the poor scattered Sheep; but with their Covetousness and Cruelty alienated our Minds from them, whilst in Sincerity we did seek the Lord God: And when he saw that we were desolate and forsaken, and none sought after us, then did he remember the Promise that he had made of old, declared by the Mouth of his holy Prophet *Ezekiel*, and did both seek and search us out from wandring upon the Barren Mountains, & from amongst the Briars and Thorns of the Wilderness, which did tear the Wool from off us; and the Lord himself did become unto us a Shepherd, and hath gathered us into his Fold, where our Souls find Rest, and he feedeth us in fresh Pastures: so that we have no cause at all to turn aside from following of him; for we are in Truth the Sheep of his Hands, not at all gathered by your Labours, nor by the Priests whom ye have ordained and sent forth; neither hath any one of your Curates ever healed our Wounds, nor strengthned us when we were weak and diseased: Therefore in Justice and Righteousness you cannot claim any Spiritual Jurisdiction over us, nor at all blame us for separating from you, seeing you were first separate from us; but if you have the Mind of Christ, you will rejoyce that we meet together in his Name, and obey his Light in our Consciences, though we follow not you.

Read *Ezek.* 34.

Mark 9. 38.

But if you object and say, you have Spiritual Jurisdiction over us, and may justly blame us for separating from you, because that many of us, when we were Infants, were baptized into your Church, and did enter into Covenant to continue in the same, &c.

We answer, That then we were not at all capable to know or understand the Doctrine of your Church, and much less of true Faith and Baptism, and therefore we could not then enter into any such Covenant as you speak of: But if you say, that we did it by our Sureties, who did promise and vow in our Names, We answer,

That

That to no such thing were we then capable of consenting; therefore you must wholly look to the Sureties which your Fore Fathers took; and if they caused them to promise and vow that which they are in no wise able to perform, you may do well to take heed of doing the like to others: And now that we are come to Years of Discretion, till we can see your Church in the Life & Power of God, and your Doctrine in all things according to Godliness, we cannot for Conscience sake joyn with you.

Therefore (Friends) in all your Visitations, Mind the Apostle's Example, who went forth to visit those to whom they had preached the Gospel, that did believe, and were gathered from the *Jews* Synagogues, and *Heathens* Temples; and do not stretch your selves beyond your line, nor ambitiously seek to be Lords over us, whom ye have not convinced to your Way, nor laboured at all among us; for what have you to do to judge them that are without your Church? Therefore take heed, lest the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls (who doubtless hath Sheep which are not of your Folds) do judge you as bold Intruders, that would Lord over those of his Heritage, which he never committed to your Charge. Therefore receive this Advice from us, who in Humility do respect the Office of a Bishop, and can give double Honour to those Overseers that rule well, though we can't give flattering Titles, nor respect the Person of any man; for in so doing, our Maker would soon take us away.

Act. 16.36.

1 *Cor.* 5.12.

John 10. 16.

Job 31. 21.

Prov. 28. 21.

First, Come ye to the Light wherewith Christ hath enlightned your Consciences, that while you seek to take the Motes out of your Brethrens Eyes, you may see that there be no Beams in your own, which may so blind you, that you cannot discern Tares from Wheat, nor a Wolf from a Lamb: Therefore first begin the Work of Reformation in your own Hearts and Houshold, till ye be wholly blameless, as the Stewards of God, &c. according to the Apostles Doctrine, 1 *Tim.* 3. & *Tit.* 2. 7, 8, 9. And be not ye called Lords, because Christ said to his Disciples, *The Princes of the* Gentiles *exercise Lordship, and their great Ones exercise Authority; but it shall not be so among you*: So in Obedience to Christ, if ye would be esteemed his Bishops, be ye good Examples to the Flock, that you and your Ministers have convinced to your Way, and to all People, that you may have a good report of them that are without, & be not lifted up with Pride, lest ye fall into Reproach, and the Snare of the Devil.

Luk. 22. 23, 26, 27.

1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 2, 3.

2. *Secondly*, That there may not be a Cry of Oppreſſion in the Country, Reform your Officers, Prieſts and Curates, until they be every way Blameleſs, as the Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt; and ſet them not up meerly becauſe they have natural Parts and human Learning, but try (if you can) whether they be of God, or no; and whether they have received Power from on high by the Gift of his Spirit, and be made apt to teach or no, before you ſend them forth: ſee whether there be a Neceſſity laid upon them to preach the Goſpel; if ſo, then they will do it freely, as well in Time of Perſecution, as in Time of Proſperity: And if you would have your Courts eſteemed as Spiritual, then let not your Officers in them be carnal, earthly Men, but virtuous, impartial, Men fearing God and hating Covetouſneſs: And let none of your Prieſts *be ſuch as ſay, but do not; nor be call'd of Men Maſters; nor have the chiefeſt Seats in the Aſſemblies; nor go in long Robes; nor lay heavy Burthens upon the People; nor devour Widdows Houſes; nor for a Pretence make long Prayers, nor uſe vain Repetitions in their Prayers,* as the *Heathens, chief Prieſts & Phariſees* did, which Chriſt cryed *Wo* againſt; *neither let your Prieſts preach for Hire, nor your Curates divine for Money,* which thing the Prophet *Micha* cried *Wo* againſt; neither let them be ſuch as *Iſaiah* called *greedy dumb Dogs, which never can have enough, but all look to their own Way, every one for his Gain from his Quarter*; neither let them be ſuch as go in the Way of *Cain,* which will envy and perſecute; nor ſuch as go in the Way of *Balaam* for Rewards; nor ſuch as will ſell Words for Money, which have Hearts exerciſed with covetous Practices; nor ſuch grievous Wolves, as the Apoſtle ſaid, *will not ſpare the Flock (but even ſue People for Wages, whom they do no Work for)* neither let be at all Hirelings; for Chriſt ſaid, *ſuch care not for the Sheep*; but let them be ſuch as do every way accord with the Primitive Pattern; and let none of them be *prophane Swearers, nor Drunkards, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Fornicators, nor Gameſters, nor Scoffers, nor ſuch as ſpeak Lyes, and are given to Lightneſs and fooliſh Jeſting; for how can they that be evil ſpeak good Things?*

Read *Mat.* 23.

Iſa. 56. 10, 11.

Micha 3.11, 12.

Jude.

2 *Pet.* 2. 14, 15.

Act. 20. 29

Joh. 10. 12, 13.

Mat. 12. 34.

3. *Thirdly*, Reform your People, that one may diſtinguiſh between your Church and the World: ſeparate the pretious from the vile, and withdraw from every Brother that walks diſorderly; and let not your Church be made numerous with Unbelievers, nor ſuch eſteemed

med Members, as do live in Covetousneſs, Pride, Envy or Malice; nor any that is an *Extortioner, or an Oppreſſor of the Poor, Fatherleſs & Widdows; nor any that live in Gluttony, Drunkenneſs, Rioting and Exceſs; nor any that be prophane Swearers, Lyars, Cheaters and Cozeners; nor any which abuſe themſelves with Mankind; nor any that be Murtherers or Man-ſlayers; nor any that be Adulterers or Adultereſſes, becauſe ſuch have no Inheritance in the Kingdom of God, nor of Chriſt.* And you that profeſs to be Biſhops or Overſeers of the Church, *which is his Body*; let not any be admitted Members, *but ſuch as are baptized into it by the Spirit; for if any Man have not the Spirit of Chriſt he is none of his*; and ſuch will coſt like *Iſhmael*, at the Movings of the Spirit in thoſe that are his.

Jer. 15. 19. *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. *Epheſ.* 5. 3, 4, 5. 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. *Chap.* 12. 13. *Rom.* 8, 9.

Fourthly, Reform your Worſhip if you can, till it differ neither in matter, nor manner; in whole, nor in Part, from the Apoſtles and primitive *Chriſtians* Worſhip, and let it not be *mad vain with the Doctrines, Commandments, Traditions and invented Ceremonies of Men*, which will all periſh with the uſing; but worſhip God (*who dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*) wholly in Spirit and in Truth; if you have received the one, and know the other, you will ſee that no other Worſhip, beſides the Worſhip in Spirit, is either decent, orderly, or accepted with God.

4. *Mat.* 15. 7, 8, 9. *Joh.* 4. 23. *Col.* 2. 20, 21, 22. *Act.* 7. 48.

And when you have ſo reformed your ſelves, your Officers, Prieſts and Curates, your People and your Worſhip, till you be both in Word, in Spirit, in Worſhip and Converſation, one with the Primitive *Chriſtians*, that Men may joyn with you, and not touch an unclean thing; then ſee if we cannot have Unity and Fellowſhip with you: But in the mean time let us quietly feed in our green Paſtures, and follow Chriſt, the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls, who leads us to living Fountains of Water; and take heed of curſing us whom the Lord hath bleſſed, leſt it fall upon your own Heads; for until you have found Doctrine, and the Example of a good Converſation, with *Chriſtian* Love and Charity, to draw us to a Conformity, ye may deſpair to drive us by Force and Cruelty; for the more of that ye do exerciſe upon us, the more ſhall we be confirmed; and it will alſo manifeſt your Church, not to be the Lamb's Wife, but rather a Daughter of that Mother of Harlots, that hath drunk the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jeſus.

Rev. 17. 5, 6.

Therefore conſider of theſe things, and think not to ſettle your ſelves

ſelves with Threatnings, Excommunications, Priſons, and the like; for by ſuch Things ye cannot convince Gainſayers, that your Way is right; nor at all ſhake them that be in the Truth, though ye may fright Hypocrites, and make them come bending under you for a Seaſon, till they can get over you: Therefore it will be your Wiſdom to ſhew your Zeal in caſting out the Filth from amongſt your ſelves, and ſuch as profeſs your Way, and by a virtuous Life and wholſom Doctrine, ſeek to win ſuch as differ from you; For things are not now as they were thirty Years ago in this Nation; for Light is broken forth as the Morning, and your Steps will he marked; Therefore wait that God may direct you the right Way, *To do unto all Men, as ye would they ſhould do unto you.*

Having ſpoken the Truth in Love, We reſt your Friends, deſiring that in Love ye may receive and read theſe Lines; and do not ſlight that which concerns your Peace in them, becauſe they are ſent from us that be in Scorn called QUAKERS.

The 5th of the 7th
Month, 1662.

A

Poſtſcript

Concerning the Proceedings of thoſe called *Biſhops*, againſt us.

NOtwithſtanding the Reaſons before given againſt your Juriſdiction over us, which might come to the Hands of ſome of you near twelve Years ago, and remain unanſwered unto this Day; ye have both againſt Reaſon and Truth proceeded againſt us in you Courts, and cenſured us, over whom ye have no Power, and excommunicated us, who never were of your Church, and perſecuted ſome of the Lord's People unto Impriſonment, and kept them in Priſon by your Writs of Excommunication till Death, becauſe for Conſcience ſake they could not conform to your Way; ſo that to all the former Evils, of which ye were faithfully warned, and adviſed to reform, ye have added this alſo of Impriſoning the Lord's Servants, or cauſing them to be impriſoned till Death, that in your Skirts alſo may be found the Blood of the Saints and Servants of Chriſt Jeſus: Therefore repent, and ceaſe to ſmite and perſecute thoſe which are the faithful Servants of Chriſt, whom you profeſs to be your Lord; and do not, like the evil and ſlothful Servant, ſay in your Hearts, He delayes his Coming, leſt in an Hour when ye are not aware, he give you your Portion with Unbelievers and Hypocrites in utter Darkneſs, where ſhall be weeping, wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth.

J. W.

THE END.